

THE YEARS OF FAITH

E. Harold Carter

Of all the things that sat heavily on Robert Lomax's conscience his treatment of Lois Donaldson was the worst. And yet, oddly enough, his act had been the most spontaneous and the least calculated.

He had been on a hunting trip in the woods and had gone out alone, against the advice of his guide. How his gun happened to be discharged he never knew, but it was fortunate that the accident occurred near old Donaldson's cabin.

Lois was 17 at the time. Her only education had been that imparted by her father, an old scholar, who had become a recluse and chosen to bury himself in the heart of the forest. She heard the gun discharged and ran out, to find Robert weltering in his blood and barely conscious.

With simple remedies applied to his wounds, the girl nursed him back to life. Her father was already in his dotage; he hardly recognized the stranger, and it was natural that the girl and the young man, thrown together so much, should come to care for each other.

Robert was astonished to find, in the mountain girl, a lady. Lois was well educated, if not along the usual lines. Her manners were those of gentle folks. Some said old Donaldson had been a big man in his day before he went to the woods to fight some secret battle of the spirit there.

Robert told the girl of his ambitions, his position in the city, his prospects of wealth. And when he said that he loved her, she believed him as much as he believed himself.

"I shall come back a year from today and claim you, dear," said Robert, as he kissed her good-by.

And he meant it, for at 27 a young man means all he says to a girl. It is only later that cynicism arises. Robert meant to marry this girl who was so singularly in contrast with the

women of his home city, artificial, for the most part, and attracted toward a young man of position and a secured income.

But two weeks after his return Robert had already forgotten the girl. A sudden turn of the wheel of fortune raised him from comfort to affluence. He found himself engaged in a fight which would mean millions to him.

The fight was won, but, when it



"He Is Working Hard," She Told Herself."

was won, Lois was long ago forgotten, except in those moments when conscience sat on Robert Lomax's heart.

The year passed into two, three, four, five. Donaldson had long ago gone to settle his problem in a place where perhaps a clearer light illumines things. And Lois waited with supreme faith in her lover.